

News of the Week

King Albert of Belgium has accepted the degree of Doctor of Laws tendered to him by McGill University, Montreal.

Minister of Munitions Lloyd-George is rapidly organizing the workshops of England for the more rapid production of all munitions of war, and will co-operate with the French in massing heavy guns at chosen points.

On June 22nd and 23rd Dunkirk was bombarded by guns placed at a point in Belgium 23 miles away. Half a million British troops are being massed between the German army and Calais.

General De Wet, the rebel Boer General of South Africa, has been found guilty on eight counts of the indictment charging.

During the week there has been considerable fighting in various parts of the war zone, with very little that is decisive in result. In the section where the British troops are massed there has been a comparative lull, but the French have been engaged in some heavy battles, especially in the vicinity of the Argonne Forest in Northern France, where the Germans again used flaming liquids and asphyxiating bombs. There has also been severe fighting in North-eastern France, where the French have made very satisfactory progress, having reached within five miles of the German Lorraine border. The Italians also have been in the thick of battle, and, although with heavy losses, are pushing resolutely forward, having gained Montefalcone and pushed on to a comparatively short distance from Trieste. The Austrians deny that the Italians have taken Plava, as stated in recent despatches. After withdrawing in orderly retreat from Lemberg, and so saving their army, the Russians have again concentrated, and are making a stubborn stand on the Dniester River, where, at time of going to press, fierce battles are in progress. From the Dardanelles little of moment is reported, but there is a rumor that seven German submarines, en route for that locality, have passed through the Strait of Gibraltar. If true, there will be necessity for strenuous precautions on the part of the Allied vessels in Eastern waters.

The Flowing Invocation.

(By Helen Waddell, in the 'Manchester Guardian'.)

Shinzo sat cross-legged in the courtyard of his house and looked before him. The stream from the mountains slipped past him in the darkness, chuckling to itself; from the rice-fields rose the croaking of the unwearied frogs. The paper shutters of his house were drawn; they glowed with the opaque radiance of a Chinese lantern. Figures went to and fro within, casting shadows. It reminded Shinzo of a toy that he had seen once in Tokio—a painted paper house that revolved round a candle. Inside the screens they were preparing the body of O Tsuyu San, his wife, for burial.

O Tsuyu San's name signified the dew of the morning. They had been married for a year, and she was dead in childbirth. It augurs ill for a woman when she dies in childbirth. Shinzo was not imaginative, but on that visit to Tokio he had seen the lacquer panels in the outer court of the temple at Asakusa, reproductions of the seven Buddhist hells. The seventh is the Lake of Blood, in which O Tsuyu San was even now drowning. Shinzo remembered the lacquer red and black, and with it, consequently, the pitiful roundness of her chin.

A mosquito sang through the darkness, shrilling suddenly in his ear. He struck at it, and the small voice stopped. Shinzo was sorry. Remorse took him; he fell to wondering whose soul it was he had sent out again and in which hell it would expiate that short, poisonous life. Or if the gods would let it be reborn again before they struck. One thing was certain; they would not forget. It might have been many rebirths

since O Tsuyu San was a woman of evil life; but the gods had not forgotten, and to-day they had struck, and her soul would go down into the Lake of Blood until it was clean of that stain. Then it would begin again, after its aeons of torment, some little life, low down on the Wheel, without warning and without memory. The croaking in the ricefields rose to an ecstasy and the shadows on the screens were monstrous.

Presently their wailing ceased. There came a small sound of tapping; it was O Ba San, his mother, emptying her pipe against the metal of the 'tabakobon.' The screens slid apart and the neighbor women come out, groping in the dark below the verandah for their wooden clogs and lanterns, while O Ba San, squatting on her heels in the gap of the shutters, bowed her head to the floor, and pursued the retreating guests with ceremonious leave-takings. There was a chorus of the 'Sayonara' ('Since it must be'), which makes even farewell in the East a compliment, and the women clicked past him on their high clogs, each with her swaying lantern, until the night received them. They did not see him where he sat. The mother of Shinzo, peering into the darkness, detected in the shadow the motionless figure of her son. Her crackled treble rose querulously.

'Didst hear it, O Shinzo? The wife of the Maker of Tubs? But yesterday, and delivered of twins. And I had the offer of her for thee.'

The stolid figure made no sign of having heard. O Ba San shrilled higher.

'Hast thou no shame in thee, O Shinzo, to have brought such shame upon this house as never was in Sakai? To-morrow will the Flowing Invocation be set up over the brook yonder, that every evil-smelling seller of 'daikon' that passes on the road may put up a prayer for her, and think pity on the man that took her to wife, and the house where she brought to birth.'

Shinzo raised his heavy eyes. 'The Flowing Invocation?'

'Did I not say it?' cried O Ba San triumphantly. 'Never in thy memory hath there been need of it in Sakai. But once—hast thou no mind of it?—thou wert but as high as a 'tatami' is broad—I took thee to the hills, to the house of thy father's uncle at Mitamura. And we passed it on the road, and I made thee fill the dipper and pour water for the poor soul in torment. I had to hold thee up; thou couldst not reach so high.'

Slowly Shinzo remembered; a little mountain stream, and a cloth flung across it, hung by the corners to four bamboo poles, a cloth with characters upon it, and a weather-beaten tablet with the name of a woman dead. He remembered how he had filled the dipper that hung by it, and emptied it into the cloth, and said after his mother the great invocation, 'Namu yo, namu yo ho ren ge Kyo.' He remembered, too, how slowly the water had dripped through.

'Ay, said Shinzo. 'I remember. But what has that to do with—her?'

O Ba San eyed him half pityingly.

'The sooner thou hast one set up yonder the better for her. See you, Shinzo, it is this way. Kwannon the Compassionate had a tenderness for women in her case—there be some say that Kwannon herself.'

'It is not good,' said Shinzo, 'to speak ill of the gods.'

O Ba San spread her hands.

'Under the candlestick,' she said profoundly, 'is the darkest place. How so be it, Kwannon got leave from the Buddha that the like of O Tsuyu San should have pain in the Lake of Blood only so long as the Web of Expiation is wearing through. And every time the water is poured and the name of Buddha named the mesh grows thinner. And when it wears a hole and the water drips readily, even so her soul slips through the nets of hell.'

'And how long,' asked Shinzo eagerly, 'might that be?'

O Ba San meditated.

'The one on the hills at Mitamura, it was nine years. But,' hastily, 'it was a lonely spot, and few passers-by. And one by the Great House at Owari. But she was a 'daimyo's' wife. It was six weeks.'

'How!'

O Ba San laughed a little contemptuously. 'Thou has not much wit,

Shinzo. Kwannon wove a web before she changed her world; it is kept in the temple at Nikko; so fine that the mists might drip through it. And the priests sell it. But not to the like of you.'

'What might the price of it be?'

Again O Ba San laughed.

'The 'daimyo' at Owari paid a thousand yen. Thou hadst better go down to the temple and see what they will give thee for thyself, and thy father's house, and all that thou hast.'

Shinzo's head had sunk upon his breast. O Ba San eyed him, and turned in, drawing the screens behind her. She was sorry for Shinzo, but it was not her fault that she had borne a fool. How great a fool she had not realized. For that same night Shinzo did indeed go to the temple and drive his bargain with the priests. His house and his seven ricefields he mortgaged; sell it he could not, for his duty to his mother, which is piety, came before his duty to his wife, which is inclination; also he bound himself three days in every month to serve as jinrickshaman in the temple festivals. For this they gave him a web which cost one hundred yen; not of Kwannon's weaving, but guaranteed of an admirable delicacy. Shinzo felt it all the way home between his finger and thumb. His heart sank at the coarseness of it.

For a while they told stories further down the valley of a crazed man who stood knee-deep in the Kanagawa and baled continuously, seeming to rest neither day nor night. At first he stopped between every dipperful and eyed the cloth anxiously where it sagged at the great name of Buddha. But experience taught him patience; it only wasted time. Then on the evening of the thirteenth day O Ba San, his mother, came out to him, and, sitting on the bank, reproached him with the bitter reproaching of old age in the East. The baling slackened after that, and Shinzo went doggedly to the thinning of the rice in his fields, watching the road eagerly for passers-by. There were not many.

It lasted eighty-seven days. Then came a night that Shinzo went out an hour before dawn, as he was wont to do, and the brightening east found him squatting before the Flowing Invocation; the dipper idle beside him. A devil had possessed him; not of doubt—that would have set him free—but of guile. The light broadened. Shinzo reached for the dipper, he had not emptied it once. Deliberately he rose and poured the water, but instead of chanting the invocation he counted ten, stooping the while that he might see the under side. 'Ichi—ni—san—shi—go—roku—shichi—hachi—ku—ju.' In the pause the first drop globed itself and fell with great deliberation. So had it done for seventeen days. Shinzo straightened himself. Then he went and searched in the brook for two rough stones, and when he had found them he stood over the Web of Expiation and ground the Sacred Name between them. He did it carefully, for it is not easy to hoodwink the gods. Then he filled the dipper and emptied it, uttering the invocation with great devotion and reverence. The fluff scraped from the cotton settled like fine, clinging sand. He brushed it off with his hand and bent to look up. A spark of light gleamed in the opaque whiteness of the web, like the hole a child makes with a pin in the paper shutters. Shinzo laid down the dipper and went home to sleep, stepping carefully, for the dew was bright on the grass.

It happened when Shinzo was three-and-twenty. He is now middle aged, and the father of seven sons. For in a few months' time he married the sister of the wife of the Maker of Tubs, thereby performing his duty to the ancestors, and O Ba San died respecting him. But for himself, he has no illusions. He knows that when he dies the devils will receive him and will grind him, even as he ground the sacred name of Buddha, between the upper and nether millstones of hell. Yet is his serenity unshaken. As he went home that morning he saw O Tsuyu San reborn. She is a dewdrop on the lotus that grows before Kwannon in paradise.

A Brace.

The Collector—"I bought two Whistlers to-day."

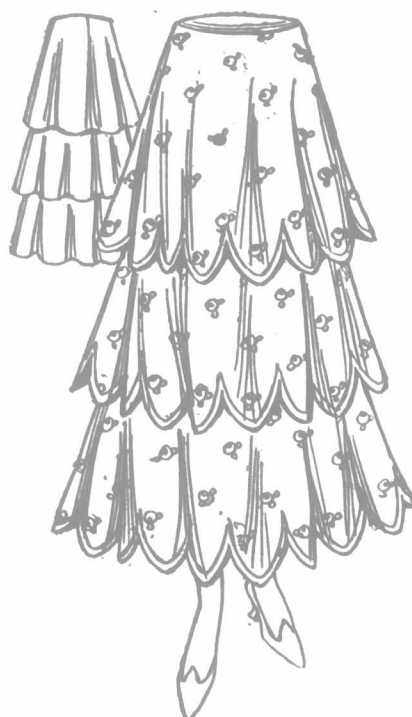
The Lady—"Ah!" A male and a female, I presume."—Judge.



8690 Dressing Jacket, 34 to 44 bust.



8685 Boy's Suit, with or without Belt, 2, 4, 6 and 8 years.



8707 Three-Flounce Skirt for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.